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COURT REPORTING SCHOOL – HITTING THE PLATEAU AND MOVING ON

Some may consider me to be one of the lucky ones since I got out of court reporting school in less than two years and took my CSR (California Certified Shorthand Reporter) test 15 months after I began court reporting school and passed the test on my first try. Why I write “**may** be considered one of the lucky ones” is because I went through so quickly I picked up few briefs and was pretty naïve as a 20-year-old in a field that requires business acumen and social sophistication. My first two years as a court reporter were really tough, a huge learning curve in many ways, (the subject of a future blog post.)

The focus of this post is to talk about hitting a speed plateau, and what to do next, in my opinion. My speed plateau was 140 – 160. I got out of theory in four weeks. The rest of the speeds, 100 – 120, 120 – 140, every speed I was out of the class in two or three weeks. I was intense, competitive, and determined. Then I hit 140 – 160. Ugh.

My typical day during court reporting school was to wake up, get to school by 8:00 a.m., then at 2:00, when school got out, drove straight to Terra Title Company and type title reports until 5:30. After work I would go home, have dinner, get out my machine and write for two to three hours. That was Monday through Friday. I refereed soccer games all day Saturday and Sunday. I was obsessed with getting out of court reporting school.

So when I got to 140 – 160 and week one, two, three, four, five, six – month two, month three, month four went by, I was frustrated, angry, and scared. Every Friday we would get our speed tests to allow us to move on to the next speed. Every Friday I failed. I remember vividly the first week of month six, it was a Friday, the jury charge was given, but I missed by four. That day when I heard I didn’t pass, I got into my peanut butter-colored Opel, drove out of the parking lot, crying. Rather than driving straight to work, I drove to Harbor Island, parked my car, and looked up at the downtown San Diego skyline. I remember saying out loud to myself, “That is where I want to be, working as a court reporter. As God is my witness, I am going to be a court reporter.” (I loved old movies and Scarlett’s great line about never being hungry again.) I made up my mind at that moment I was going to pass the jury charge the following week. It was a new mindset that I had not experienced before. It is a knowing I can pull up even today when I am in a deposition and everyone is talking 300+ WPM. I have read about sprinters and marathon runners hitting the wall during a race or in their workouts. Great athletes, I believe, know how to re-focus and get into this zone, their “Wa.”



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My advice to court reporting students stuck at a certain speed, do the work. Go to class. Practice, practice, practice. You can't cheat the school or the system or yourself with excuses about missing classes and not practicing. No one cares if you are too busy, too tired, too distracted, or too... Reaching the speeds necessary to pass each speed test takes discipline and hard work. It also takes a mental mindset, a feeling that is difficult for me to put into words.

I suggest when you are tired, frustrated, and angry just stop. Find an inspiring and quiet place to sit. Focus on what you truly want, who you want to be, and make up your mind you have the ability to get there. Then be at peace with yourself and court reporting school. Be conscious of that feeling at that moment. You will need to draw on that feeling to get through school, testing, and work. That feeling is something that needs to be practiced and strengthened.

You might think it is a little crazy, but I gave that feeling a name when I went through school. I called it "Wa." (I don't know how to spell it, since I have never written it down before.)

During the taking of the California CSR, the CRR, I remember putting my head down and saying to myself, "It is time to be in Wa." To this day when the testimony is out of control, I go back to the state of Wa.

Maybe in a future blog I will try to explain Wa more. It's a tough subject. Being a great court reporter takes tremendous skill, but more importantly it is a mindset that comes from within.



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